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NOTE.

ON LUCIAN'S NIGRINUS.

The difficulty of distinguishing between the formal and the spontaneous in Lucian's work leaves commentators grotesquely at variance in regard to the intention of certain of his writings, and notably of the *Nigrinus*. From Wieland to Croiset there is a series of critics who accept it as a serious document, either a 'confession' or a tract for the times. On the other hand, Ant. Schwarz will have it pure satire, a parody of the sudden conversions aimed at by certain philosophers. P. M. Boldermann, in a really valuable contribution to Lucianic doctrine,¹ by misapplication of a fruitful theory, classes the dialogue among those in which Lucian imitates comedy in the manner of Menippus: *Nigrinus* is a comic character, but his talk is pure Cynic doctrine. E. Schwarz, reviewing Boldermann's essay in the *Philologische Wochenschrift* for March 21, 1896, refutes this notion easily enough, but sets up in place of it one of his own which will hardly be more satisfactory to Lucianic scholars. "Die Schilderung des Klientenelends im *Nigrin*," he says, "ist nichts als eine kurze Wiederholung der ausführlichen Darstellung in den Klienten, sie gipfelt hier wie dort in einem scharfen Angriffe auf die Philosophen, welche sich freiwillig, nur durch den Glanz des Reichthums und der Vornehmheit geblendet, zu solcher Misère hergeben, nur mit dem Unterschiede, dass die Klienten nur eine scharfe Invective gegen solche, die hellenische Philosophie diskreditierenden Philosophen sind, der *Nigrin* das positive Gegenstück liefert in dem Bilde des Platonikers, der zwar das stille und feine Athen mit dem lärmenden, grossstädtisch rohen Rom vertauscht hat, aber gerade hier ein leuchtender Exempel für echthellenische Weisheit ist. . . . er ist ebenso zu der Klientenschrift das Gegenstück wie die Entlaufenen Sklaven zum *Peregrinus*, wie der Fischer zu der *Βίων πρᾶσις*, wie der *Ikaromenipp* . . . zum *Δις κατηγορούμενος*."

¹ Diss., Leyden, 1893.

Now, it is undeniable that the discourse of Nigrinus gives a shorter description of the matters set forth at length in *De Mercede Conductis*, but if it was intended as a *pendant* and in some degree a corrective thereof, it is unfortunate that while *De Mercede Conductis* was written in a realistic spirit, with the author's eye on the object, the *Nigrinus* was composed on a palpably sophistic plan with argumentation that will not bear scrutiny. The comparison of Athens and Rome is manifestly *ad captandum*. Of the generations of critics that have taken it as a serious contribution to *Sittengeschichte*, not one seems to have noticed that, with the exception of their undue interest in horse-racing, the Romans are not charged with a single vice or folly which is not also laid at the door of the Athenians in other of the Lucianic writings. (Cp. *Nig.* 23 with *Epist. Cron.* 35 and *Gall.* 9; 30 with *Charon* 22 and *De Luctu* passim; 31 with *Navig.* 23; etc.) The dialogue is interesting as proving that it was fashionable once more to write in praise of Athens; but if it be compared with *Navigium* and *Gallus*, we must admit that, as far as Lucian's evidence goes, we have nothing to prove that society in Athens differed more widely from society in Rome than the province always differs from the capital.

The mystery of the *Nigrinus*, as of other Lucianic works, has remained unsolved because critics find it hard to believe in Lucian as a sophist. Few casual readers take the trouble to study the contemporaries whom he outshone. Even Lucianic scholars, after formally crediting the sophistic with their author's early training and first success, are wont to state that he broke with the system midway in his career, and to treat of him thereafter as though he were as completely a law unto himself as *Thucydides* or *Plato*. We find even recent commentators like *Croiset* speaking of him as returning to rhetoric in his old age, as though there were any evidence to show that he ever abandoned it. The famous passage in *Bis Accusatus* cannot be pressed to mean more than that he substituted the composition and delivery of dialogues for that of *meletae*. The other part of the sophistic programme, the *prolalia*, he apparently retained; the *Prometheus* in *Verbis* is such a work and was designed, by internal evidence, as the introduction to a dialogue recitation. It is my belief, then, that the *Nigrinus* not only shows traces of the sophistic style, as all allow, but is actually a sophistic work. I conceive that Lucian, having occasion to address an Athenian audience, determined on

two points: that he would give them a sort of Panathenaic oration,¹ and that he would do it in the Platonic manner, of which he had made a special study. In pursuit of inspiration for the first point he read Pericles' funeral oration in Thucydides² and Plato's Menexenus. Catching from the Menexenus the tone of ironical admiration which aptly secured the lightness of touch called for by the occasion, he enforced it by dipping into the Protagoras.³ We are accustomed to dismiss as pedantic and futile the methods by which the later sophists studied the great classical writers and aimed at reproducing their effects, assigning to Lucian's 'sophistic period' none but works of hopeless frigidity. The Nigrinus should save us from such blunders. We can hardly doubt its success with the audience for whom it was written; still more gratifying to the author would have been the knowledge that posterity would, on the strength of it, write him down a moralist, a patriot, and sometime a Platonist.

EMILY JAMES SMITH.

¹ When the sophist Alexander visited Athens, *ἡ μὲν δὲ διάλεξις ἐπαινοὶ ἦσαν τοῦ ἄστεος . . . , Παναθηναϊκοῦ γὰρ λόγου ἐπιτομὴ εἴκαστο*, Philostratus, Vit. Soph., 2, 78, 13 ff., ed. Kayser. Cp. Aristides' Panathenaic Oration.

² Besides the explicit quotation in the preface, cp. Nigr. 13 with Thuc. II 37, Nigr. 14 with Thuc. II 40.

³ Cp. Nigr. 35 with Prot. 328 D.